Signet

94-95

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Special Thanks to
Aimee Duffield, Susan Stabley, &
J. Diane Mowrey

Dedicated to Mr. Peterson

Ripped off corduroy

By: Scott Holmes

"The waiting drove me mad..."

Clocks with all the time to waste
sat and laughed at my anxiety
that you solely caused and
created like artificial air, now

"You're finally here and I'm a mess..."

The place sticking up in the sky
like my hair I'll comb for you.
Your scent sleeps in everyday,
oversleeping when I'm up early, when

"I take your interest back..."

To the bank that stores your stare
in boxes, percents of which
become inflated like eyes in shocked blue,
darting around in familiarly lost territory, but

"I can't let you roam inside my head..."

Without paying the price
I'll have to undo my wallet in echoes
and screams behind the empty white walls
that like me for all that I want to be so

"I'll end up alone like I began..."

Unfinished Quilt

By: T. Alex Thomas

Through the opened shutters
a deathly cold wind tears at curtains
that once lay lifeless --
pink flowers sprinkled on crepe blue.
And the rocking chair creaks
as it sways through centuries.
Silent sounds echo the cats meow
getting lost in smothered air --
And it cries for lost company
playing with the ancient yarn
that fell from the frail hand;
yarn that doesn't match yeasterday's patch,
but no one sees to care.
And on the cold, bare, marble floor
she lies alone
dead beneath the chair
clutching her grandson's present
she tried to finish
before time captured her --
No more.

Grandma B.

By: Leigha Basini

On grainy afternoons
we walked down tree-lined sidewalks,
our sizes reversed. I bounced
a tennis ball, counting
each time it hugged the ground
while you pointed out
hydrangeas.
Inside the health food store,
the aroma of ginger beckoned
as we picked out mint carob bars and organic carrots.
We built delicate mansions out of playing cards
on the dining room table and gently blew on them
until they fluttered to the floor.
Songs of children with scarlet fever
lulled me to sleep as you covered me
with an afgan you knitted when
you could see.

myers park woman walking myers park dog

By: Andy Toughy

walkitbabywalkitbabywalkitbaby
it's five o'clock in an affluent

suburb

get that apron and get that leash
in the house before hugh returns

from work

the hungry helper's getting cold
and for damn sure it's about time

to eat

randal and kate won't stop punchin'
the nintendo god and homework's

so lonely

whose gonna take you away when
calgon's bubbles have all burst
and Newhart reruns have all been

seen?

-lights dim soft and life leaves the dead-

once again, evening in an affluent
suburb, nine o'clock, it is time

time to take the dog the dog the dog
walkitbaby. . .

Partners

By: Christa D Jones

They didn't see him, for thousands of years --
his firelight dances,
his frantic invitations,
his private hungers --
beneath the arctic glass

(she existed cold...) and the man
told the stories of what -- much before

(the communion of one frozen ancient man to his daughter
four thousand years to be
on the earth and in the ice

(Antarctic in her veins and in her secret place)

like a child in a universe without
the sun they dance the ice's dance,
the little games played each night to warm the ice
and fight the dark)

Chanson d'un Coquillage

By: Ashley Capps

"O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again, as first I knew you in the timeless valley, where we shall feel ourselves anew, bedded on magic in the month of June. O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again."

---Thomas Wolfe
Look Homeward, Angel

We are shells
of all we ever had, and ever were.
The days, sweet yesteryear, the moments,
the things that go away from us.
We miss them, somehow,
like pearls we never meant to make
nor lose.
We cannot call them back.

The child, for a time, is magic.
Passionate carapace, he breathes,
suspended above us, some shimmering,
desperate thing -- perfect;
golden by virtue of his ignorance,
and thinking all else the same.

We mourn them like lovers we wish we had not left.
We mourn them like Eden, and rivers.
We feel there should be a place to put flowers,
we feel -- there should be more than this.

The child tastes fruit, realizes flesh.
Cranes, to look back, to see again
the field, the leaf, the brook.
Turns slightly stone.
He cannot hear the wind's song,
nor his own.

We know it must be like this.
In the space it takes
for time to turn an instant
we are void of element,
and haunted by mirrors and seasons.

The child
droops
like a god with broken feet who,
for the rest of his days,
shall remember
how running
used to set him free.

pinching

By: Katherine Furler

To you, rain, I say keep up
Even though the sky holds you
    in a glass
Inverted and dismayed
Bursts of clouds cast you towards
    the pile that is the number
    counting my today frustrations
Stay with your permeated digits
Remotely controlled
Downpour of retribution -- you concede
    to attempt and saturate
Commodities of time and penciled effort
But I have written in permanent
    temporal matters
And you, rainfall, are granted
    assurance to be fascinating.

A Park Bench of Farmers and Slaves Playing Checkers In The Fall

By: Scott Holmes

Every leaf has got to die.
Reincarnation is no true option,
but maybe an osmosis
of dust and wind,
seedlings caught in a low
pressure system
sitting upon the jet stream
like a park bench of old men
with plaid hats
and checkerboards of kings and
coffee stains
that have heard more gossip
and complaints about
the desperate need for rain
than any tabloid or
Farmer's Almanac
ever could.

Farmers know when leaves perish,
when trees run naked
in the backyard
while the corn is raped
and the pigs are bribed and
blackmailed out of dieting
and becoming healthy
swine,
so they become separated
from their families
and themselves,
like slaves were
by men who wanted
to be free,
among other things.
Freedom in a country
that hardly focuses on the
importance of seasonal
influence upon man and
property anymore
and how we live and eat and
survive
without really understanding
how leaves reinvent
themselves.

Trip

By: Ched Lohr

we traveled downstairs
maybe to the intestines
of the city
only these intestines
smelled dirty
and had newspapers
all over the walls.
anyway, we stepped on the train
that took us
away
from that
immortal center
of knowledge
away
from that
fading monumental body ground
in fast life-like motion.
we stepped off
and arose
into the streets
of china
only to walk into
a pornographic store
to buy chewing gum
from a four foot tall
man.
those two men
on the intestine train
smiles as they spoke
of the previous night's
dinner.
cities and strangers
always interest me.

twelve month lease with rubber ball boy, love

By: Andy Toughy

take a bus out of town
(through the city)
to the suburbs,
place of houses
with trees,
to the building
where she once was,
but had left,
like Elvis
clean the door
and up he stairs
faster and faster,
(so) your heart beats
only to stand still
and pretend
she doesn't

count

now, hop back (on the bus)
scamper back
to your dorm
where you can write it
(write it all down
and make your poem)
so you remember
you were
the one
who told her to
leave

Golden Anniversary

By; Leigha Basini

Each day in the dim hospital
the scent of steril guaze
bandages became more familiar.
My grandma handed me
a fistful of quarters to play
Ms. Pac-Man because
children weren't allowed to visit
patients. A week later, when I had
the high score, my parents
coaxed a nurse to let me upstairs
to see Papa on their anniversary.
Grandma carried a sweet-smelling
cake from the grocery store.
As we rode up the elevator
nurses gave me dirty questioning
stares. By Papa's room
a leper hobbled on crutches, practicing
his walk without two legs. We sat
around Papa in the small dark room
as he ate with people he did not
know and celebrated something he
could not remember.

Untitled

By: Amy Bache

In high school,
I KNEW MY LIFE.
Under my thumb,
Control, structure, **GOALS.**
GOOD GRADES, considering;
I read s l o w l y
Very slowly.
I fight with jumping letters an words.
I fiHGT wiHT UmpJIng WrDS And SreTTEls.
Weighted eyelids in the presence of
A BOOK,
Not being able to spel Realy well allot of the thime.
Always needy of
Lots and Lots of sleep, and time for homework
More than what others need
Low
Low
SAT scores, go figure.
But somehow
By the grace of
...Someone,
Here I am.
COLLEGE
(one of those high school goals). However,
College is
UpSidE DowN, CHaotIC at times
8am -alarm
8:12 -it reaches my ears
8:23 -I ask myself, "what do I really **want** to do?"
8:31 -Still SLEEPING
8:36 -F-- it
8:39 -O.K. Get the hell out of bed
8:57 -leave dorm
9:00 -first class
EVERY CLASS
My head is controlled by air currents in the room
My eyelids don't know which way is up
My pupils come together
and clap hands

From 9-12noon.
SHOULD I EVEN GO?
It's just more U P N
J M I G letters and words and pages OH MY!
Thoughts surface slowly
As brain f
a
l
l
s out of the back of my head.
Around me it seems others grow smatter (that is smarter)
While I
"FLY BY HIGH IN THE SKY, WHY?"
Do I regress
Into failure AGAIN?
The Whole in my head fills with
Cheese cake
AS my Lactose intolerant body
Hurts and
Grows with
Pain and
Bloats with
Air.
S L O W L Y i think,
"Amy, run away! When you come back it'll all be different
and better."
So i sleep
A hard, middle of the day sleep
To the numb sound of a knock at my door
And the voice I long for says,
"Amy,
If it hurts you to look ahead
for fear of failure,
And it frightens you to look back
because the past was never perfect, but better than now,
Just look beside you
I'll be there."

And so i wake
from *that* dream
To the sunlight
of other people's
Happy day.

Parker's Mill - a story

By: James Brown

That was it. That was an idea fit enough for a holiday or a funeral, he thought: he was going to write his story. He was going to show the trees and the buildings his true self, in a way that's simple everyday life never offered him. Conversation had never cut his rock, or his jaw. Words were mere bumps in the regular rotation of his lungs and rarely seasoned his thoughts. The pictures seemed clear enough, but he always questioned the ears.

But, this was a fine opportunity to prove himself of some worth; this was a chance to show that there was something inside his skull, or at least his head.

He had to figure out a few things first and, in what he supposed a rather interesting story-telling choice, he decided to start at the beginning. Also, he was going to tell the story in third-person narrative, so he could just dismiss it as its own creation in case anyone ever questioned him on its source. It couldn't be from his own experience, though -- a story must have character. And thus he spoke...

The change in Jimmy's left pocket (58 cents) was not a very useful disturbance. It only occupied his hand. The need to count the change did not exist. An now he could no longer rationalize his counting of it. He concentrated on the cold weather, he thought of freezing in it. The night seemed oppressive, it seemed pissed off. The woods made funny noises and he tried not to hear. He counted his change again.

"I'd really rather have no shoes on," he said to the empty sky. Walking along Parker's Mill Road at two in the morning with Jimmy was Buster. Jimmy gave him a sideways glance.

Buster poked his ears out of his high collars.

"What?" Buster muttered.

"I said, I's really rather be barefoot right now."

He counted his steps. Ten, eleven, twelve.

"Jesus used to go barefoot, didn't he?"

"How the hell would I know Jimmy?"

"Well, I think he did. Seems funny that a guy who walked so much wouldn't even get himself a pair of fuckin' shoes, don't it, Buster?"

"Yeah, I guess. Never really thought about it before. Never really wanted to, you know -- so i gotta ask: Why the fuck are you asking me about Jesus' feet, Jimmy?"

"Oh, I don't know. Just trying to make conversation."

"Better luck next time."

After numerous trips out Parker's Mill Road, in search of beer, in search of distraction, they found that the walk was easiest when they weren't paying attention. Twenty steps passed into five with a little diversion. The road's bumps and curves had been molded to Buster's walk. But tonight the pavement left footprints. Tomorrow it would improve itself.

Buster stopped when he came to a beer bottle lying lonely in the middle of the road.

"You know what, Jimmy?"

"What?"

"I'm tired of waiting."

"Waiting for what?"

"Exactly," he said stooping to pick up the bottle. "Waiting for what? Waiting for nothing, because nothing ever happens."

"Wouldn't it be that nothing *always* happens?'

They both paused.

"I don't know. But I waited around all summer, man, waiting for something. You know what? This summer sucked, man, it sucked. But I got a good feeling about the autumn."

"Autumn?"

"Yeah Jimmy," Buster said as he held the beer bottle over his head. "Yeah, man, this is gonna be my fall!"

And he launched the beer bottle high into the night sky. It twisted and spun, its neck spying a smart view of the flora and fauna and cement. It thought it saw stars and moonbeams and something shiny. It hurdled back to earth and smashed rather innocuously on the barren road. Buster and Jimmy took a long look at the shattered bottle.

"Hey man, that was cool."

"Yeah... let's get going."

At this point, they came up on an especially dark patch of night up ahead. Something obviously filled this space. And with just a few more steps they recognized that it was Big Tom.

Big Tom. Big Tom was, of course, the owner of Big Tom's Auto Grocery, where Jimmy's dad was known to spend his more prosperous moments with a globe-trotting smile that seemed to say that he and his money would soon be parted.

Big Tom was a nice enough fellow it seemed to Jimmy. Though Big Tom seemed to be bleeding his father's money dry, he was just a business man, and possibly even a reputable one.

Buster, on the other hand, had always had a sore spot for Big Tom ever since he flunked Buster in Driver's Ed. According to Buster, Big Tom would take up his customary space in the passenger's seat (quite a bit a space to be precise), sip for a while from a mysterious bottle and usually fall asleep. This lack of proper guidance resulted in Buster flunking his first, second, and third driver's test. Buster had his license and his piece of mind, but just the mention of Big Tom sparked resentment through his funny bone.

"Who is that?" Big tom bellowed from his big lungs. "Who dares walk on my road at two in the morning?"

"Oh shit," Jimmy whispered. "What do we do?"

"Just hang for a second."

Buster and Jimmy stopped fifteen feet from Big Tom. Buster could only think of his poor report card, and 58 cents whirled through Jimmy's left hand. They watched for any strange moves. Sure enough, Big Tom stumbled around in the dark. He began walking (staggering) toward them with the intensity of a glacier.

"I said who is that on my road?"

Jimmy turned to Buster, the indecision glistening in his eyes and leaving its footprints in the dirt.

"What do we do?"

"Man, he's so fucked up, he ain't gonna do nothing."

And with that, Big Tom thundered to the ground. He groaned once and rolled gently from side to side. He finally came to a halt.

Jimmy suddenly relaxed. Buster attempted to appraise the situation rationally.

"What do we do now?"

Buster paused thoughtfully, rubbed his chin and answered, "Shit, I don't know. I guess we should...uh...help him up."

Buster and Jimmy each grabbed a wing and pulled Big Tom up after a much rather unnecessary struggle. Big Tom eventually gained his balance (sort-of) and looked at the boys.

He pointed a long big finger at Buster. He opened his mouth, and while Buster waited for some sort of communication, Big Tom's eyes swirled.

"I know you," he gasped, his breath scraping every edge of his sandy throat. "You were in my Driver's Ed. class, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir, I was."

"Yeah, yeah, you were my best student, weren't you?

"Well, *you'd* never know the difference," he replied crisply.

"Yeah, I know you. Hell, you come on in." He waved a big arm clumsily at his tiny shack just off the road. The shack seemed depressed and sullen perched on its own private shadow. Hardly seemed the suitable location for such a big man as Big Tom.

Making a wide and awkward spin towards the front door he noticed Jimmy. He again made use of his big finger. "You're Frank Jr., aren't you?"

"No, that's my brother. I'm--"

"Hell, Frank, you're always welcome here."

"Thank you, sir."

"When's your ol' man coming back to see me? Haven't seen him in a while..."

"I don't know, sir."

The inside of the shack wasn't much cleaner than the outside. The weary couch was quickly smothered with Big Tom's bigness, as he lunged to beat Jimmy and Buster to it. Jimmy and Buster, though, were interested only in getting back out to their road.

Jimmy sheepishly stepped forward. "Well, sir, we're gonna take off."

"Yeah, thanks for...uh, not killing us, sir."

Big Tom did not stir, the boys made sure of that.

"Do you think he's dead?"

"No, he's just big, that's all. Let's get out of here."

But, as they turned, Big Tom finally did stir.

"Hey! You boys got any faith?"

"What?"

"I said, do you boys got any faith?"

Buster looked inquisitively at Jimmy. Jimmy shrugged.

"I got fifty-eight cents."

"Fifty-eight cents won't get you into heaven, boys! Although, if you wouldn't mind floatin' me, I'll make sure your dad gets it back."

Jimmy handed the fifty-eight cents to Big Tom, who was now sitting up.

"Thank you, son. Boys, I been around, I ain't gonna lie." He lurched to his feet. "I seen a lot of white lines in my day and a lot of exit signs. I been north an south and east and west. But, I tell you one thing--"

And Big Tom passed out cold on the worn throw rug which covered his worn floor.

"Jesus Christ! What the hell was that all about?"

Jimmy nearly had to run to keep up with Buster, who was getting away from Big Tom's at a furious pace.

"Wait up! Why'd you bolt?"

"I'm just so sick of metaphors, that's all! Why is it always metaphors? I mean, double negatives never hurt nobody!"

"What are you talking about?"

Buster halted. "White lines, exit signs, he was my driving instructor...ring any bells?"

Jimmy paused. While groping for a reply, he suddenly remembered he didn't have any change.

"Roads! My god, I'm so sick of that road metaphor thing. Life is a road? What the fuck is that?"

And it was there, I think, that he stopped writing his story. Suddenly, his little adventure out on Parker's Mill Road seemed just that: A little adventure.

When he sat down to write, he couldn't remember why the hell he was on that road. He couldn't remember where he was coming from. And the only place to go, of course, was home. The story itself didn't seem such a fine idea, really. He didn't have any words anyway.

I think he just lost his conclusion. Maybe he didn't have one, maybe he didn't want one, maybe it went too far into the distance to see--he certainly couldn't hear it. Whatever the case, I think he just got bored by the whole thing.

rub

By: Katherine Furler

gray blue water
from casting
tidals above
my wrinkled reach.
I caught my notebook
spinning around
while I was struggling
for awakeness.
we exchange oil, salad,
and burdens.
and the difference between
praying and laughing is
that we are the
young magicians.

My Father's Worship

By: Tyra Cooper

The night I caught him with the needle,
He reminded me of a witch doctor summing up the
Evil spirits, as he sat there,
One arm tied with a leather belt.
There were no volcanoes in which to throw
Vestal virgins; no goat hearts to be drained of the blood.
Too evil for my innocence to understand.
My heart pounded at what I saw.
His eyes rolling in the back of his head,
As the potion entered his bloodstream.
And engulfed by the rapture, he sat there
Motionless, as if praying to some ancient deity.

My father's worship

La Lucha

By: Jim Damron

"Estoy agotada. ¿Por qué estoy agotada?" dice ella.

"Yo no sé. Tal vez estas enferma," dice él.

"No, no es eso. Me siento bien," dice ella con la cerveza en su mano.

La conversacíon entre él y ella termina. Ella corre al trabajo y nada es differente. Este día es como todos los otros. Pero hoy, ella esta sorprendida por lo que pasa.

"¡Ay, ay, qué dolor!" dice ella mientras que coge su estomago. ¿Qué esta pasando?"

" Ja, Ja, Ja!" dice una voz. "No trates de pelearme. No puedes ganar."

"¿Quién es?" ¿Por qué me dueles?" dice ella. "No tengo dinero y no quiero aflicíon."

"¡Es demasiado tarde!" dice la voz.

"No te entiendo. ¿Donde estas? ¿Quién eres? ¡Contéstame!"

La voz no dice nada y alla no comprende lo que ha pasado. En un momento, ella se siente bien. Pero otra vez llega el dolor. Esta vez le duele el estómago. Una voz no puede tocar a una persona. ¿Como puede ser que siente tanto dolor?

Después del incidente, ella vuelve a su casa. Le explica a su esposo su experiencia. El esta enojado. "¿Quién fue? Lo mataré." dice él.

"Eso es el problema. No sé. No lo vi."

El próximo dia, ella desayuna y bebe su cerveza como todos los dias. Corre al trabajo y nada pasa. Pasa horas y mientras esta en su oficina, cae al piso con mucho dolor. "¡Ay, la cabeza! ¡Me duele la cabeza."

"¡Ja, Ja, Ja!" dice la voz.

"Tu, tu otra vez. ¿Qué quieres de mi?"

"Yo quiero matarte," le responde.

"¿Por qué quieres matarme? Nunca te hice nada."

"Es porque quieres morir."

"¡Que horrible! ¡Que tontería! ¡No quiero morir! ¿Por qué dices eso?"

De repente, pasa el dolor. La voz desaparece. Ella vuelve a su casa otra vez y le cuenta de nuevo lo que paso. Su esposo se enoja.

"¡Que rabia! ¡Este es el colmo! Voy a matarle."

"Pero no sé quien es él. ¿Qué voy a hacer? Yo..." Se cae al suelo. No hablara mas. Esta muerta.

Nunca descubieron quien era el hombre que trataba de matarla. El único testigo era el esposo. Desgraciadamente no podía ayudar. A causa de la muerte de su esposa, se volvío loco y alcohólico. Ahora es él que oye la voz.

SIGMUND, PLEASE LEAVE FRIEDRICH ALONE

By: Chris Kohler

For as long as I remember,
you have always been around
to impede my view
or just to say hello
whenever I looked down to see
if my laces were tied
or to note how far I had climbed...

Yes, you, fat-headed dwarf,
reaching higher
to remind me with a bitter whisper in the ear
the last time we stopped to have a bite to eat,
or a cool, hard drink to quench the thirst.
I regard your ways as pestilent,
an attempt to hinder efficiency.

I can't help thinking how simple
it would be
to sever you from this rocky journey with a blunt blow
across the head.
But even with your absence
thoughts of you would still remain.
For every time that I'd look down
to note how far I'd climbed,
I'd realize that something's missing
within the corner of my eye...

I'd think of your clever, inescapable grin,
the good times we had together.

A Hall of Sorrows

By: Christa D Jones

what makes the hall of mirrors turn to the hall of horrors?
it couldn't be the way she strained to stand alone
and tell him no
not that way again
and the way the mirror tells the truth
to her because she can see all the story she chose not to tell
those harsh lights
(about the cleaving and how she lay gorged and she tried to use that vanishing cream to hide the bruises no one could see anyway)

and only when the sun is up can she believe that light
has truly vanquished what happens in the night --
the mirrors turn themselves to horrors
and every sound a man can make is a menace
and the new men who try to bring their hands in close
are horrified as she slowly turns dead
and their voices echo down her hall of sorrows
and only she can hear a siren song

Living Space

By: Scott Holmes

The house is a cupboard of wind,
saucers of rain,
goblets of snow,
the windows, faded rays of sun
and Daddy flies a kite
in the kitchen.
Molly sits beneath the stairs,
a storage space,
a home inside a home,
surrounded by the deep wood
of inclement weather
and she's wet from the mist
of the storm
in the pantry.
Always wiping the water
from her eyes,
she rains with tears
that manage to see outside,
the sun blowing heat
on the cold shudder lids
of her house's face
and the mail just arrived.

Lost History

By: T. Alex Thomas

Nana quilts together
patches of lost time.
Pop reads the paper,
squinting eyes
little lines.
Embers glow
helped by gentle wind
through naked oaks.
The unknown chill
creeps slowly
throught the attic window
forgotten to be shut.
The clock coo-coo's
to signal time
that has fallen through
my hands.
Denied of tomorrow
lifeless tears fall upon
my aging lap.
Hidden from Nana,
Hidden from Pop.
They will live the life
I long for,
but I wiil never have
a history
to quilt
to tell
to read
to live.
One year is all I have
they say,
"Cherish the days."
So calm
So sweet are they
and I
Watching the snow
Staring at death.

Veins

By: Ashley Capps

Who are the ones we wait for,
the ones for whom, having never known them,
yet we long?

Perhaps they never really come, perhaps
they are only
to be scared into out minds,
slight torches
to flicker, haunt,
and never die.

Everything burns here, somehow.
That tree which blazes brightest
in autumn
is yet only winter's cinders.
And if nothing else,
I have seen
how the phoenix of the strongest dream
grows weary of the longing,
and the rustle of wings flickers, and is gone.

Yet we search,
hoping desperately, somehow,
among sifted ash
some rubble might remain us.
A pebble
of bone and magic we may yet not call a dream again.

I live
and wait
for you to come to me,
like flower sprung from flame.